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THE TERRITORY

THE COMPLETE TRILOGY

SARAH GOVETT

'Truly exceptional ... exciting, gripping and intense'

Book Trust

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Winner of the Trinity Schools Book Award

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‘This is a truly exceptional novel, exciting, gripping and intense, with relatable protagonists whose agonies become the reader’s own. It deals with complex moral dilemmas regarding loyalty, self-preservation and family, forcing the reader to answer the uncomfortable question: who deserves to live when spaces are limited? This is the first of a trilogy and the final cliff-hanger will leave you clamouring for more.’

Book Trust

‘Truly heart-wrenching! Govett raises issues about our education system, the environment and questions governments around the world are making. I’d go so far as to call this the 1984 of our time and recommend this as a great read, with a fantastic political context.’

The Guardian children’s books site

‘Govett has created a powerful and shocking novel that makes the reader wonder how societies would deal with the environmental consequences of climate change and if there could ever be any ‘right’ course of action ... an excellent, thought-provoking book.’

Children’s Books Ireland

‘...an enjoyable, fast-paced read, and raises some interesting questions about how you would behave in difficult situations, as well as being a clear indictment of the UK education system..’

Books for Keeps

‘The Territory is a terrific book. It simply is.’

Bookwitch

‘I loved every second of this book it was phenomenal.’

Yourbestbookpal

‘A page turner with cinematic qualities set against a backdrop of catastrophic climate change, Sarah Govett writes with a natural ease and freshness. I gasped an involuntary ‘No!’ when I turned the final page; I really want to find out what happens next! Perfect for fans of Sarah Crossan’s Breathe series.’

Zoe Toft, ‘Playing by the Book’

‘Brilliantly plotted, utterly gripping and a devastating critique of a results-obsessed education system. This is a book you won’t be able to put down. I can’t wait for part two!’

Gemma Malley, author of *The Declaration* and *The Killables*

‘*The Territory* had me hooked from page one, gripped by its edgy and taut plot that provides a disturbing vision of Britain in 2059. I was immediately drawn into the life Noa, an engaging and spirited protagonist soon to face an exam that will ultimately decide whether she lives or dies. The tension was almost too much to bear. *The Territory* is an accomplished and compelling debut that left me hungry for the next book in the trilogy.’

SB Hayes (YA author of *Poison Heart* and *Don’t Look Back*)

LoveReading4kids

‘*More 10 Things I Hate About You* than *The Hunger Games*, *The Territory* is a brilliant introduction to a dystopian society not too far removed from our own. It goes beyond the expected tropes of a grim and bloody fight for survival and instead focuses on the daily life being a second-class citizen in that most relatable and terrifying of settings – high school... *The Territory* is a believable, exciting read that had me hanging on every word and left me wanting to find out more about a world that could be our future.’

Teen Librarian/Matt Imrie YLG Committee member

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THE TERRITORY

SARAH GOVETT



For Noa, Alba and Ned

THE
TERRITORY
BOOK ONE



My name's Noa Blake. Yes, that's Noah without an 'h'. Yes, it's a real girl's name. Apparently Noa means *movement* in Hebrew, and I moved a lot in the womb. And now. I've only heard of one other Noa – my godmother's best friend's daughter. She flunked her TAA last year, so now she's a Fish.

New Year's Resolution 2059: Pass TAA and don't become a Fish.

Uncle Pete told Mum there's an 85 per cent chance that I'll become a Fish. He didn't say 'Fish' obviously. He said 'Wetlands Citizen' in that weird, nasally voice of his, as if there was something stuck up his nostril. (A cobnut probably. Uncle Pete's always eating cobnuts, the roasted, salted type. His breath stinks of them.) It's because I'm a Norm, he said. If Mum and Dad had actually listened to him fifteen years ago 'rather than acting like mindless hippies' and paid for the 'enhancement programme', I'd be a Childe and there would be a 99.5 per cent chance that I'd pass my TAA and be able to stay in the Territory.

I couldn't hear the rest of the conversation. When Mum saw me listening at the door, she did her funny look, wrinkling up her forehead like detailed shading in Art. I'm so malc at Art. She shut the door and all I could hear then was:

Mum: 'Mumble mumble mumble ... how could you ... mumble mumble mumble ... she's clever enough mumble mumble mumble ... never forgive.'

Uncle Pete: Whine whine whine ... she has a right to know ... whine whine whine ... you need to prepare yourself ... whine whine whine ... you could speak to someone in the Ministry ... whine whine whine ... late upgrade.'

Then Mum started to cry so I went upstairs. When she cries, Mum 'needs to be alone'.

I'm pleased I'm a Norm not some freakoid Childe though.



Today's assembly was about sacrifice. Yawn. Loads of assemblies are about sacrifice at the moment. It's THE topic of Mr Daniels. I doubt he's ever had to sacrifice anything – apart from his hair. I can't think of him without seeing his shiny, bald, fat head with its squirrel's tail of grey clinging desperately to the sides.

Anyway, he was going on about Species Day or 'Dead Dog Day' as me and Jack call it. About how it had been necessary for the survival of the Territory that we put our species first and kill all the pets so they stopped using up our food. Of course he didn't put it quite like that, but that's the basic gist. We were then supposed to reflect in silence for five minutes about difficult and important decisions and how we grow from them.

It was weird looking round the hall during the silence. Most of the freakoids had their heads bowed. Jack was

picking his nose (he can be grim) and Daisy was practising raising one eyebrow. I'd learnt to do this last week and Daisy thought it looked cool. A couple of other Norms my age were struggling not to cry as the memories came back. To cry would be BAD. Deduction of a point from your TAA score BAD, and then, before you know it, 'Hello Fish Face'. The strangest thing was looking at the blank faces of the youngest pupils. They had been born after Species Day so didn't have a clue what it meant to have a dog or a cat as a friend. To feed him, stroke him, play with him and then have THEM come along and take him away.

I'll never forget that Saturday. I was seven. Me and Jack had been playing fetch with Rex in the street all afternoon. Jack didn't have his own dog as his mum thought they smelt bad and wasn't prepared to pick up their poo in plastic bags, so he always played with mine, and Rex ended up sort of being half his. I remember it starting to rain. The raindrops were massive and soaked through my clothes and started literally dripping off Jack's nose so he looked ridiculous. Rex's normally long hair was plastered to his skin so he seemed loads smaller, as if he had shrunk in the wash. I hugged Jack goodbye and sprinted up the stairs to my flat, Rex bouncing along at my heels. I knew something was wrong as soon as I saw Mum. She was standing in the kitchen with a white face, red eyes and a really straight back. And she didn't even mention the muddy trail that me and Rex had made. She talked fast, too fast. I didn't understand at first, didn't want to. Because of her job at the Laboratory, she'd been given advance warning. That night at 9pm the police were going

to round up all the pets in the Territory and kill them. No one was supposed to know so that they wouldn't be tempted to hide them or resist. The police would get to keep their attack dogs, of course. The rules never applied to them.

I asked Mum what the plan was. She's always been the boss in our family as far as organising and planning stuff goes. Dad's a bit malc at stuff like that.

'Where are we going to hide Rex?' I whispered. 'He could live under my bed. Or in the gap behind the washing machine. They won't find him there. Jack didn't even find me there when we were playing hide and seek and he's really good at looking.'

Mum pursed her lips. 'We're not going to hide Rex. They'd find him and then that'd mean...'

'What?'

'Nothing. We're just going to say goodbye to Rex ourselves. Take responsibility.' Her voice trailed off.

We waited until Dad got home from work just after 7. We gave Rex the meat we would have had for dinner, hugged him as hard as he'd let us and then sang the 'Rex is Cool' song that Dad had invented and that always made Rex's tail thud on the floor in approval. In the middle of the third verse, Mum hit him over the head with a cricket bat and he made a quiet whimper and then was silent.

We handed Rex's body to the police when they came and they wouldn't look me in the eye.



We had double Art today. Mrs Foster got us to draw a

picture of something that represented someone we knew. Most of the class, the freakoids especially, looked massively confused. All term we had been doing these well boring scale drawings of buildings and stuff, to train us up to be 'useful' architects and engineers instead of 'mere' painters, so this was a bit of a shock. Hugo Barnes stood up and asked whether we should check with Mr Daniels if this was on the curriculum, but Mrs Foster just raised one eyebrow and gave him such an evil glare that he shrank back onto his stool. Me and Daisy spent the next few minutes raising eyebrows at one another in celebration.

Anyway, most drawings were typically limp. Amanda, who spends 80 per cent of her freakoid brain obsessing over Hugo and the other 20 per cent deciding how best to draw attention to her non-existent boobs, stayed true to form and completely failed to understand the task. She drew a picture of her brother to represent, wait for it: her brother (durr!!) If you can't upload it... I can't believe she'll probably pass her TAA. I mean, the whole point is it's supposed to keep the best brains in the Territory.

I drew a picture of a blanket to represent my mum. I explained to Mrs Foster that this was because Mum's always there to comfort me and wrap her arms around me. Jack and Daisy both mimed puking, but I think Mrs Foster must have liked what I said because although, as usual, my drawing sucked, I actually got 80 per cent this time.

You should have seen Jack's drawing though. Jack is ACE at Art. He did a charcoal sketch of a dog chained to a post. It was supposed to represent his dad. The dimensions were all a bit off, in the way that only people who are properly

good at Art can pull off, but the eyes just stared back at you in a really haunting way. Black, with dots of soul at the centre. What was so weird was that the picture was exactly like Jack's dad. Not exactly like him obviously, 'cos he's not a dog, but at the same time just like him. I think it seemed so shocking as you just don't see pictures of dogs anymore, not anywhere. Not since Dead Dog Day. And because Jack's dad was a Subversive. No one mentions them either. No way. Particularly not the dead ones. Luckily, I guess, Jack's mum had already shacked up with some rich transport company boss, the guy who pays for him to come here.

Mrs Foster called the picture 'mesmerising' and hung it in one of the display frames on the Art room corridor; the one next to the window. It looked out of place next to all the other frames with their neat scale drawings and straight lines.

It's lucky that Jack is so amazing at Art. He finds Maths and science properly hard, but if he wins one of the 500 Special Artistic Merit awards he'll only need to get an average of 50 per cent in the other subjects, rather than the normal 70 per cent. Which is actually doable. And Mrs Foster is really helping him prepare his portfolio for the SAMs. She calls Jack her 'protégé' and spends so much time with him that it's almost creepy, but she's like the least creepy person imaginable and definitely not a paedo, so it's all good.

I wish I was someone's protégé. Most teachers, apart from Ms Jones, reasonably like me. But it's often a kind of pitying kind of like. Whenever they say, 'Really well done,' I know in their heads they're also saying, 'for a Norm.' It's like they don't want to invest too much in me as chances are I'll be

shipped off to be a Fish. I'll show them!

At the end of the lesson, lots of the freakoids' pieces of paper were still blank. Ha ha. That's what a malcy 0 per cent looks like!

Jack's just given me an amazingly cool picture he's done. He cycled round to mine after dinner, rang the bell and thrust it into my hands. It's of two kids playing by the stream and the water just seems to shimmer on the page. But the best part is that it's of us. Six-year-old us. Six-year-old me clutching a tattered red kite and six-year-old him brandishing a stick.

'Do you remember the day?' Jack asked.

Of course I do. It was my sixth birthday. Mum and Dad had given me a kite for my birthday and me and Jack had raced to People's Park to try it out. I ended up flying it through a bramble bush into a huge patch of nettles and Jack, knowing how much the kite meant to me, charged into the nettles to get it back. He tried to beat a path through them with this big stick. He was just wearing a pair of shorts so his legs were stung raw, but he came out grinning anyway. That's when we jumped into the stream, to cool off. Rex leapt in after us and kept shaking himself, covering us with freezing droplets, and we couldn't stop laughing. Funny to think that you could do that back then. That the streams weren't always infected. It'd be rather less hilarious now.

'I just thought of this. I don't know why. So I painted it. It's a present.'

And that's part of what I love about Jack. He'll do things that other guys would think are tragic or limp, but they're not. They're really cool.



Me and Jack have been friends forever. On the surface we couldn't be more different. I've got properly yellow (or as Daisy says 'pus-coloured') curly hair and green eyes. I prefer the term butter-yellow, but Daisy won't believe that I've ever seen, let alone tasted butter, as even when there were still cows it was reserved for the massively super-important. I have though. Tried it, that is. Mum got some years ago in a Ministry hamper and it was so good that I actually licked my plate and knife afterwards, grim, I know! My hair's bound to end up mousy brown, annoyingly, as both Mum and Dad have brown hair and only people who are practically albino stay blonde past their teens anyway. I'll have to dye it, although I'd need to make sure I do a better job than Amanda who dyed hers 'ash blonde' last year but it came out more grey than blonde and she looked like a granny who'd had a face transplant.

Jack, on the other hand, looks like he's descended from a Viking warrior. He's so broad and tall that other schools look at him massively suspiciously when he turns up to sports matches, as if they think we've smuggled in some 17 year old to play against them. He's got carrot-red hair (he'd say strawberry-blond – but it's not) and his face, upper chest and arms are covered in an explosion of orange freckles. He fries if the sun so much as looks at him so maybe he's actually descended from a Viking warrior vampire.

Jack's the kindest, most loyal friend anyone could have. We were born on the same street and have played together

from the age of three. He moved to a bigger place when he was seven though – when his mum left his dad for his step-dad. I guess, although you get tonnes of perks and subsidies working for the Ministry like Mum does, if you're just looking at the money side of it, a transport magnate does loads better. Our parents were never exactly great friends. Mum and Dad thought Jack's dad was a bit too 'political' for their taste and that his mum was, I don't know, superficial and a massive pain. I mean, she still spells my name Noah even though Jack's told her about 1000 times there's no 'h'.

They were a real odd couple come to think of it. His dad was into rallies and 'opening people's eyes to the abomination that is the Ministry' while his mum was into facials and boob jobs. I remember Jack being mortified when his mum had her first boob job. We were probably ten at the time and sunbathing in People's Park. His mum took her top off (already cringeworthy embarrassing) and her boobs (covered by tiny triangles of bikini) just sort of defied gravity and stayed shooting up into the air like proud sandcastles. I can't believe you're allowed to dress (or undress) like that in public. I mean, wear a hat and some police guy will pounce as you might be 'unidentifiable on CCTV' for a split millisecond, but make everyone in a park want to puke, no problem!

No one was surprised when she left his dad. Nor I guess when his dad was taken. He was the first person I actually knew who'd been 'eliminated' and it freaked me out for ages. Not for as long as Jack, obviously. He's still not over it. Never will be.

I think I'll hang the picture over my desk. That way I can

look at it while I'm revising. Which I guess I'll be doing FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, or until the fifth of June anyway.

I've just circled the date in red on my calendar.

And breathe...



Just spent the whole weekend at Daisy's. Mum and Dad went away to the Woods for their wedding anniversary. They do it every year. Dad calls it their 'romantic break à deux', which he thinks sounds cool as it's got two French words in it. Mum always literally flinches and hisses, 'Ben,' when he says this. I don't know if it's because it's SO completely cringeworthy or because using French is A-not-OK. They did try to invade us after all. Western France is underwater – let's go and live in Britain. Nice.

Anyway, time with Daisy is always good. We spent the whole day hanging out with Jack by the pond. Me and Jack had a competition to see who could skim a stone the furthest and when I won Jack grabbed me and held me upside down so the end of my hair dipped in the water. I yelled at him to pull me out as I didn't want my hair in that disease pool. I mean, if it's got something in it that can kill fish, it can probably make your hair fall out and then I'll never have a boyfriend, ever.

Jack pulled me upright again and held me for a second with my face just centimetres from his. I'm pretty sure he'd had toast for breakfast.

'Kiss already,' Daisy shouted, which was really embarrassing and also completely nicked from *Girl Town*, the most tragic show to have ever been broadcast. TV's pretty awful at the moment, not that Mum hardly lets me watch anyway. Apart from about two OK programmes, there's just endless malc entertainment shows and Bulletins, Bulletins and more Bulletins about our glorious Territory. Maybe it's trying to make us so brain dead that we won't mind when we fail the TAA or maybe it's some cunning plan to send us tunnelling under the fence just to escape the Bulletins. A watery death with a surprising upside.

Daisy won't accept that me and Jack are just friends (best friends, joint with Daisy) and have been since forever. It'd be like kissing my brother, that's if I had one. OK, well, maybe not quite like kissing my brother. Kissing my brother if a little bit of me was into incest.

We used long sticks to look for frogspawn under the giant lily pads past the bridge, but couldn't find any. I didn't mind too much. Last year when we found some and put it in a jar and loads of tiny tadpoles hatched, the tadpoles started eating each other, which was really grim. This year the layer of algae on the pond looks thicker and yellower. There weren't any dead animals floating in it though. That was the first sign with the rivers. Fish everywhere. Floating belly up. With dead eyes, white spots and yellowy gills. It was weird looking at them. Feeling a weird mix of hunger and revulsion.

In the evening we went back to Daisy's. Jack couldn't come as he said he had to help his mum with something, but I think it was also because he knows Daisy's mum doesn't like

him. I don't think Daisy's mum really likes me either, but she knows I always do pretty well in tests so I think she hopes I'll help Daisy study more. Be a 'good influence'.

We didn't study though. It was Saturday night after all. Daisy turned on her Scribe and we danced around her room to Kaio. Probably the coolest music the Ministry's ever provided. I know it's seen as slightly malc to be into Kaio big-time, as he's a Ministry pet and everything, but I don't care. He's still amazing, hot beyond hot, and the only way you're going to hear anything better is if you somehow manage to get a massively illegal radio and tune into a massively illegal Opposition-run station. Strangely enough, I don't have any contacts in the secret underground world of illegal radio providers and I don't believe anyone who says they've listened to one really has. I mean Ben in the year below said his cousin had one, but then it changed to his cousin's friend, and when I kept on at him about what the songs were like he looked shifty and sweaty and mumbled something that sounded suspiciously like *Into the Dark* mixed with *Faith*.

Daisy is a REALLY good dancer. She knows how to twist her hips in a really sexy way. If I do it, I look like a complete denser.

At one point she was gyrating against the wall and I wished Jack had been there to see it. Jack gets really embarrassed when Daisy goes all flirty. His cheeks and the bit of chest just below his neck go all red and his freckles seem to leap out at you, almost neon in their orangeness. Like that really orange drink everyone was drinking last year that got banned because it made toddlers turn orange and

go hyper. If you tease him about it, he goes even redder. Daisy says he'd go scarlet and probably explode like some giant supernova if I ever properly flirted with him, but she's just trying to stir things up (and show off that she now knows the word 'supernova' after flunking last week's Physics test). Looks-wise (and it seems dance-wise) I'm no Daisy.

Boys like Daisy and Daisy likes it that boys like her. She's kissed eight boys in total and that's excluding kisses without tongues. She can't believe I haven't kissed anyone yet; won't stop teasing me about it. Her two major bits of advice are (1) be careful not to clash teeth as it feels horrible and you look like a right amateur; and (2) make sure the boy hasn't just eaten a piece of cheese on toast like when she kissed Rory Pike and his whole mouth tasted like slightly stale melted cheese, which was grim.

We didn't get to dance for long though. Daisy's stressy mum had a go at us for disturbing Logan. Which is ridiculous as it was only 9pm and what normal twenty year old would care about a bit of music? Particularly amazingly cool music. But I guess Daisy's brother isn't exactly a normal twenty year old. He's a freakoid for a start.

I was really shocked when I first went back to Daisy's at the start of Year 4 and saw that her brother had a Node; was one of them. 'Cos Daisy's not, obviously. Daisy doesn't like to talk about it. Apparently her parents used to be better off. Her dad was the head of some big computer company and so they could afford the procedure – could go make themselves a Childe.

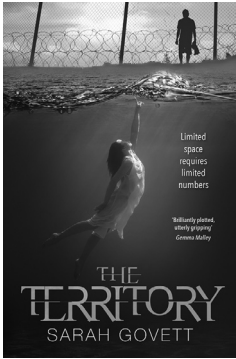
Five years later, things weren't quite so rosy. Another freakoid was out of the question. Daisy always says that she

was a mistake. I always tell her she's being a denser, but there is something about the way her mum looks at her sometimes, when she doesn't think anyone else is looking, that is really pretty cold. Kind of scary. Like Mr Hughes with Jack's Physics homework. And she gets so stressed about any test or exam. I guess she's not used to the pressure. Logan naturally sailed through everything. I remember thinking he was quite hot when I first met him, but now I can't see it all. He has Daisy's great cheekbones and perfectly spaced eyes but whereas Daisy gives off this amazing energy, he is a personality black hole. Whenever I see him, I know he's judging me. And by the look on his face, I'm clearly failing.

Once, when me and Daisy were having one of our late-night chats, Daisy asked me whether I thought my parents would come to the Wetlands with me if I failed.

I didn't have to think. 'Yes.' I said. They can be right pains, but Mum and Dad would never let me go by myself. I know they'd do anything to protect me.

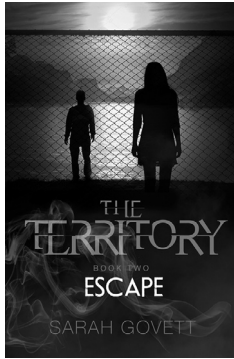
Daisy seemed to withdraw into herself a bit. 'Mine would stay,' she said eventually. 'They'd choose Logan.' I tried to reassure her and banged on about it never coming to that anyway, I mean her average test scores are kind of OK at the moment. But I know she's right. There's no way her mum, with her perfectly coiffed hair and diary crammed full of coffee mornings, would pack up and move to a malarial swampland. Not for her child. Well, certainly not for her daughter.



The Territory

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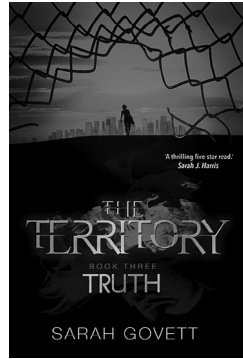
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